

From: conner
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/28/02 6:32am
Subject: Antitrust Suit Against Microsoft

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am not necessarily a fan of Microsoft. I do, however, believe that Microsoft, and its customers, should be allowed to do business as they see fit. I do not think that a third party (Netscape, Sun, et al.) should be allowed to interfere with any consensual transactions between Microsoft and its customers. I am a Microsoft customer and user. I also use Linux, Netscape, Sun and many other non-Microsoft products. I know computer professionals who make it a point of not using Microsoft products--it is possible and it is certainly their right to do so. I am an engineer and software developer, and if I did not wish to use Microsoft products, I could do so and still generate applications (which could be compatible with Microsoft products).

Microsoft does not and cannot own the entire software industry. It has dominance in the software industry, but it is not a monopoly: there are many competitors. If customers did not like Microsoft as much as they did, there would be many more competitors. The only things that could prevent such competition are forces outside of Microsoft, its customers and its competitors.

If I were to try to compete against Microsoft (which I can do because of my very low overhead), would it be reasonable for me to claim that Microsoft should give me its source code or be forced to do business in another fashion so that I could compete? If so, I could claim the same against any business larger than my own, or any new engineer could claim the same against me. If the department of justice were to act on such claims, disastrous consequences would follow. Confidence in the ability of the government to protect business would be greatly diminished, and businesses would be less likely to pursue or continue new ventures. As an example, observe the behavior of the stock market after Judge Jackson's decision (which was later called into question).

It is not only the direct consequences of such decisions, but their underlying principles that should be questioned. Adherence to such principles has consequences not only in business, but also in every aspect of our lives. The principle I am defending is an individual's right to life, and his concomitant right to pursue his livelihood in his own way without violating the rights of others. So long others' rights are not violated, I must respect Microsoft's right to do business as it wishes, if I am to respect any rights.

Charles D. Conner

Professor, Electrical Engineering
Capitol College
Laurel, Maryland